

HARMONY FIRE DISTRICT

P.O. Box 360 – 194 Putnam Pike
Harmony, R.I. 02829

The regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was held at the Harmony Fire Station on Thursday, **January 28, 2010**.

Present: Chief Stuart Pearson; Moderator - Raymond Fogarty, Jr.;
Treasurer - Sandra Owens;
Clerk - Ann Dahlquist; Attorney - Fred Mason, Jr.;
Board Members - Louise Michaels, Milton Huston & George Kain

Absent: Tax Collector - Kimberly Barber; Board Member - James Richards

I. – Meeting Called to Order: **7:08 pm** by Moderator Fogarty. This reopens the meeting recessed at **7:30 pm** on **November 19, 2009**.

II. - Approval of the minutes from the Oct 15th meeting.

These minutes were originally presented at the meeting held November 19th and the vote was tabled. Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the October 15th meeting. If not, he would like to call for a motion to accept them.

Milton made a motion to accept the minutes. Louise seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. – Approval of the reports from the November 19th meeting.

These reports were originally presented at the meeting held November 19th and the votes were tabled. Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on these reports, as presented in the copy of minutes from the meeting. If not, he would like to call for motions to accept them.

Milton made a motion to accept the minutes. George seconded the motion. The motion carried.

IV. – Adjournment of the meeting recessed November 19th:

Milton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Louise seconded it. The motion carried. The November 19th meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **7:11 pm**.

V. –Call to Order for the regular monthly meeting January 28, 2010:
7:12 pm by Moderator Fogarty.

VI. - Approval of the minutes from the November 19th meeting.

Moderator Fogarty asked the board if there were any discrepancies to note on the minutes from the November 19th meeting. If not, he would like to call for a motion to accept them.

Milton made a motion to accept the minutes. Louise seconded the motion. The motion carried.

VII. - Treasurer's Report:

Sandy presented her reports for the months of October and November. Beginning balance October 1st \$575,645.30 and the ending balance November 30th \$559,025.09. There were routine expenses during these months. The largest expenditures being the life insurance payment in October and payments for equipment replacement in November.

Reviews have been made of the fund accounts in preparation to pay for the new rescue. There is a CD coming due in March, but other than that everything else is available.

Ray asked if Sandy had the December report. Sandy said that the bank statements had just come in last week and she had been unavailable to prepare the reports at that time.

George made a motion to accept the treasurer's report. Milton seconded it. The motion carried.

VIII. - Tax Collector's Report:

Kim was not able to attend the meeting, so her report was presented by Louise.

Taxes collected in the month of November were \$10,475.61 and in December were \$10,622.14. The taxes receivable balance is \$122,725.15 as of today's date.

Geoff Malo, the district's accountant, has come in and collected all of the information needed to prepare the fiscal year 2008-2009 financial audit.

Sandy asked about the tax sale, if anyone knew when the next one would be held. Louise checked the minutes and said that in November Kim had said the next one would be held in August. Sandy stated that she thinks we missed having one last year. George said that the last year it had been held on August 19th. He read from his copies of past minutes that there had been one (1) property at the actual tax sale, of the twenty-three (23) originally on the list. Sandy made notes that the next sale would be held in August 2010.

Ray asked that it be noted that Kim had been instructed to stay home tonight, due to the icy roads. Therefore hers was an excused absence.

Louise made a motion to accept the tax collector's report. Milton seconded it. The motion carried.

IX. - Chief's Report:

Work with the Chepachet and West Glocester Fire Departments has continued at the training site. Work tapered off during the winter months, but should pick up again hopefully around mid-March.

The Firefighter I Class that started here in Harmony back in October, has now been completed. The Hazardous Materials (HazMat) portion has also been completed.

The Glocester Fire Chiefs have been meeting with the Burrillville Fire Chiefs for the past couple of months regarding fire service in Rhode Island. The next meetings will include the towns of Foster and Scituate. These general discussions show that we are being proactive in opening the lines of communication collectively.

Sandy stated that she read in the paper that Lincoln is consolidating their fire districts. The Chief confirmed that Lincoln, as well as parts of Coventry, has consolidated. Ray mentioned an informal analysis that had been done to compare our fire districts tax rates and bills over the past five years, after reading an article about another fire district in the area. Our bills averaged \$500 five years ago, now they average \$400, which is about a 20% reduction. The other districts tax bills are over \$1,100 and this is not an uncommon amount for many districts. Obviously they made different decisions than we did, such as bringing on a full-time crew. We continue to support our volunteers and seek out alternative forms of revenue. George agreed stating that we have not made the changes that these other districts had. Louise commented that we provide a quality service for an affordable price.

On November 29th our annual Christmas Tree Lighting was held here at the station. It was well attended and a great time was had by all. At this event we asked for donations of canned goods for the Gloucester Food Pantry and they included us in a public thank you they placed in the Bargain Buyer.

Several of the Fire Inspectors from Gloucester met with individuals from the Gloucester Building Inspectors office, including the Plumbing and Mechanical Inspectors. Many issues involving inspections and plan reviews were discussed. These meetings put us all on the same page, promoting consistency and coordination among the fire inspectors in the three fire districts and the town building inspectors.

Again this year, Harmony participated in the Gloucester Police Departments annual toy drive.

Also, the Chief gave an update on the condition of Captain Randy Brackett. As the board members had been previously notified, Capt. Brackett had suffered heart problems after completing an ice rescue on December 27th. The Chief reported that he has recovered nicely and is already back to work and has resumed an active status on the crew.

The Chief attended two – two day training programs sponsored by the RI Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), ICS 300 and ICS 400. ICS stands for “Incident Command System.” Upon completion of these courses, Harmony is now certified in ICS 100, ICS 200, ICS 300, ICS 400, ICS 700, ICS 800 and Hazardous Materials. The Chief also filed an application to become part of the RI Incident Management Team (RI IMT). If selected for a position he would be activated in times of statewide emergency.

Lieutenant Donna DeConte has completed an Instructor Coordinator (I/C) class. Having licensed I/C will benefit the department by being able to train in-house. This will not only be convenient for the crew, but it should also save the district a significant amount of money over time. Louise made a motion to send Lt. DeConte a letter of congratulations on her achievement on behalf of the board. Milton seconded it. The motion carried.

In February and March Harmony will be hosting several classes. Beyond the Basics, Firefighter II and an EMT Basic class. There will be a lot of activity at the station, since it is booked every night for the upcoming two months. Louise asked if these classes are just for our crew members or if they are open to everyone. The Chief stated that our people would get first choice and then the enrollments would be open. She then asked how many people were in each class and the Chief replied, approximately twenty-five. He said the nice thing about the EMT-B class is that we have seven people enrolled, some existing members and some new. So within six (6) months to a year, we will have more EMT's on the roster. For the EMT class the students pay us, we pay the I/C. Financially we are doing OK on this

class so far. Later on though, if our crew members who took this class remain active for one full year, we reimburse them the cost they paid for the EMT-B class. Milton asked what the EMT levels were, the Chief replied EMT Basic, EMT Cardiac and EMT Paramedic. Louise asked if individuals that had EMT-B's had to remain that level for a certain period of time, before they could go for their EMT-C level. The Chief replied no. She was amazed that there were no rules in place to require experience, before continuing their education. The Chief stated that he recommends to our personnel that they complete their EMT-B, then wait a year before taking the EMT-C. It gives them time to gain some experience and in the long run it will be beneficial to everyone.

Then, on a personal note, the Chief wished Louise a Happy Birthday, it is coming up on Monday. He also inquired how her Mother, whom recently had surgery, was feeling. Louise thanked the Chief and stated that her Mother was feeling much better.

The Chief also had one more question for Sandy. He had received an e-mail today from RI DEM requesting copies of canceled checks needed to complete the requirements of our grant to release the funds. The checks had not cleared as of the last statement and Kim cannot access the account on-line to check on their status. Sandy said she has never used the on-line banking option, but she would contact Citizens Bank tomorrow to try and get the information. She said Kim should not be set up with access to the bank accounts since it would be a conflict, it should only be the Treasurer. Sandy said she will talk to Kim and get the check details tomorrow.

Ray asked if the Chief had met with the schools. The Chief said that he, Chief Goodnough of West Glocester and Steve Sette of the Glocester School Committee had met with the Glocester School Superintendent. They had a general discussion about fire department details for school functions. If the school building is used for anything other than an educational purpose, such as a dance, then a detail is required according to RI State Fire Code. He believes that they were trying to say that they did not want us to provide a detail if they had to pay for it, but they were willing to pay for a police detail. After some discussion and explaining that it was not a police officer's job to uphold the Fire Code, they eventually decided that they were only talking about events that take place two or three times per year, so they would just pay for it. It was also decided that both Chief Pearson and Chief Goodnough would meet with the school boards of both elementary schools, to explain to them the requirements of having fire department details. Milton thought it was good to open the lines of communication between the fire departments and the schools. The laws are put there to plan for the potential and protect the public, they are pretty clear. Some discussion followed regarding: promoting volunteer firefighter details at school sports activities, requirements for medical directors and posting a rescue at events.

Louise made a motion to accept the chief's report. Milton seconded it. The motion carried.

X. – Harmony Fire Department & Improvement Association Report:

There was no representative of the association available to present a report.

XI. - Committee Reports:

a. Rescue Committee – Jim, Chair

The Chief presented this report due to Jim's absence. He stated that everything is coming along well. He had asked the vendor about the payment due when the chassis was received, they said to hold off until the vehicle is delivered. The vehicle should be ready for

inspection the first or second week of April. Ray asked if we were under budget and the Chief stated that as of now, we are.

b. Call Pay Review – George, Chair

George stated Kim and himself spoke briefly about the call pay today and they will start working again on it again next month. They will work with the Chief and try to fine tune the plan. The Chief stated that they need to have rules and regulations in place first, before they can implement the new call pay plan. Ray asked when the proposed new plan would go into effect, July 1st? The Chief replied yes, but the plan needs to be finalized before the budget is approved, so we have the figures.

c. Policies & Procedures Manual – Chair Unassigned

The Chief reported that the Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines (SOP's & SOG's) for the department have been completed. Next the Administrative Policies and Procedures, a human resources manual, will need to be done. Milton was appointed Chair for this committee. Ray added that we should try to find someone from the community to be on this committee and Kim should definitely be part of the it also. The Chief mentioned that some of the organizations that she belongs to may be beneficial to this committee. She has made many contacts at other fire districts through these organizations, which may be able to provide information that applies specifically to a fire district. Discussion followed on sexual harassment policies and incident reporting. Louise suggested that we check other organizations employee handbooks for comparison.

d. Charter & By-Laws Review – George, Chair

Copies of the Harmony Fire District Charter and By-Law's were included in everyone's folders. Ray suggested a couple of outside people need to be brought in to be on this committee. Ray's feelings are that the Charter is antiquated and it needs to be cleaned up. George stated that he went through it and only found a couple of things that he thought really needed to be cleaned up. Much discussion followed about the process of changing the Charter and By-Law's and bringing them up-to-date. Attorney Mason clarified the legalities of the process. Charter changes have to go through legislature, By-Law changes can be done at a regular meeting. Ray stated the way it has been done is that Charter changes have to be presented at the annual meeting to be read and then voted on at the next annual meeting. He asked what would happen if we had to go out for bond though? It does not seem as though this is a good process. It needs to be looked into. Ray stated that he also thinks in the future the Charter and By-Laws should be reviewed every five years. The board agreed.

XII. - Old Business:

Ray asked about the attendance policy for district board meetings. George suggested that there should be a change in the wording of the By-Law's to have it read excused absence, not just absent, in regards to board member attendance. Louise agreed, stating that they had just mentioned that earlier in the meeting. Ultimately the board would have the final word, if any rulings had to be made. The board agreed that absences are recorded in the minutes and a "score card" is not necessary. The e-mail notifications between Kim and the board seem to be working fine. Communication lines are open at all times.

XIII. - New Business:

Ray said he belongs to a group who is trying to make good, statistically correct, information about RI public knowledge. He is trying to collect information where either we or fire districts in RI in general rank very high against other states. For instance, Glocester is listed as 73rd in a Forbes study of the best places to live in the US, Scituate is 37th. Scituate Reservoir is listed as 2nd in the nation for best drinking water. RI ranks 2nd in the US for emergency medicine, 7th for patient safety. His goal is to get the Harmony Fire District rated as #1 in the country for "x". George stated that the statistics that Ray presented earlier were important. In a lot of states the fire departments do not provide EMS either.

XIV. - Public Input: No audience.

XV. – Executive Session: None called.

XVI. – Adjournment:

Milton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. George seconded it. The motion carried.

The January 28th meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board was adjourned at **8:35 pm**.

The next meeting of the Harmony Fire District Executive Board
is scheduled for Thursday, **February 18, 2010**, 7:00 pm, at the Harmony Fire Department.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kimberly S. Barber".

Kimberly S. Barber
Tax Collector/Secretary